

THE USE OF  
T'IENTH FOR GOD  
IN CHINESE.

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## Why Protestant Missionaries in China should unite in using the words T'ien Chu for God.

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*First: Because thereby the entire Christian Church, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic would come to be at one in China as regards the word for God.*

In Europe and in the United States, however Christians may differ in other respects, they are united in every language in the use of the word for God. So in the various languages spoken in the Turkish Empire, Christians, whether Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Greek Catholic, are united in using the same word for God. The same is true of the Missions in India.

Are we then in China *alone* to differ on this point from the Latin and Greek churches? Are we to teach Christians among the 400,000,000 of this great empire to call the God they worship by a different name from that which is used in these churches?

Still further; in Japan and Corea the Chinese language is used much as the Latin language was formerly used in the nations of Europe, and a vast number of Chinese words have been incorporated into the languages of these two nations. The Latin and the Greek Churches in these nations have adopted the same word for God which they use in China. Are Protestant Missions to differ with them on this point also in Japan and Corea? Are we to print our Bibles and tracts with words for God which they do not and cannot use, and so widen the breach which already exists between these different branches of the Church of God?

Is it not time for Missionaries in the field, and for Bible and Tract Societies at home, to call a halt and calmly consider these questions? Is it not time to ask ourselves whether such a division in the Church of the future in these lands is necessary? Whether it may not be safely avoided? Certain it is that the Reformers never dreamed of introducing such differences into the churches. They fought their battles on other grounds.

*Second: Because thereby Protestant Missions in China would be at one among themselves as regards the word for God.*

Eighty-five years have now elapsed since Dr. Morrison landed in Canton, and yet no agreement has been arrived at among Protestant missionaries on this point.

At the present time there are three ways of representing the word God in translations of the Sacred Scriptures into Chinese, and

large editions are published with each. One of these is to use for God the word *Shên*, which a large part of the Protestant Missionaries in China and all the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic missionaries use for Spirit when speaking of the Holy Spirit.

Another is to use for God the word *Shang Ti*, which the Roman Catholics, after their long and painful controversy, rejected as inconsistent with the purity of Christian doctrine, and which many Protestant missionaries at the present time strongly object to on the same ground, which also the Greek church does not use.

The third is to use for God the word *T'ien Chu*, which is also employed by the Latin and Greek Churches. This was first employed by Protestants in printing the Scriptures in the edition of the New Testament issued in Peking about the year 1870 by the British and Foreign Bible Society. In 1872 another edition of the New Testament was printed in Peking with *T'ien Chu* for God by the American Bible Society; and since that time the same Society has printed in different editions the Old and New Testaments and numerous editions of portions of the New Testament, with the same word, *T'ien Chu*, for God.

Thus these three terms or expressions for God, not to speak of two additional formed by a modification of adjectives, are in constant use among missionaries and Chinese converts. Not only is the state of things extremely embarrassing to the Bible Societies in the home lands, but it cannot be denied that such differences, involving as they do, in the minds of many, grave questions of doctrine and Christian teaching, are a source of very serious difficulty in mission work in China, producing separations and divisions among missionaries and their converts and threatening still greater evils in the time to come. Missionaries of one nation are divided on this point from other missionaries of the same nation; missionaries of one church, of one society, are divided from other missionaries of the same church and the same society. Missionaries belonging to the same mission, to the same station even, are divided one from another. Presbyters are divided from Bishops, Bishops again from Bishops, and Presbyters from Presbyters. Each holds his own view tenaciously, and the differences take root in the infant churches.

True, the mighty power of Christian charity leads brethren to dwell together in mutual forbearance and harmony; but the differences are still there, and they are very grave. Nor is it of any avail to look back, as many have done, and sigh, "Alas for the differences entailed upon us by our predecessors." The true course is to meet the difficulties and solve them. It cannot be right that they should remain permanently in the Church of China; that they should pass over even to another generation.

*Third: The experience of eighty-five years has proved that the word Shên is insufficient as a translation of the word God when it refers to the Supreme Being.*

This word has had a fair trial with everything in its favor. The earlier missionaries—Morrison, Marshman and Milne—all used it and translated the word God by it in the first two versions of the Sacred Scriptures. Thus it came down to their successors with the authority of their names; and its use has been persistently adhered to, and ably defended by, missionaries of later generations.

What has been the result? Even Morrison, though still advocating the use of *Shên* for God in his latest work, the Domestic Instructor, employed as many as eighteen other words or expressions for the Divine Being (some of which were quite remarkable, such as no missionary of the present day would think of using) thus indicating in his own mind a want of satisfaction with the word *Shên*. Milne at the close of his brief ten years in the East had become dissatisfied with *Shên*, and advocated the use of *Shang Ti*.

In the year 1851 one-third or more of all the missionaries in China had ceased to use *Shên* for God. During the period which has elapsed since that date one Mission after another has abandoned its use, some deciding for *Shang Ti*, others for *T'ien Chu*, while no Mission which has once abandoned its use has ever returned to it, and few, if any, of the more recently formed Missions have adopted it. These have chosen to use either *Shang Ti* or *T'ien Chu*. There are Missions which are now in a transition state, some members having left the use of *Shên*, while other members still continue its use. In those Missions where it has not been formally abandoned the inquiry may fairly be raised as to how far, in prayer and devotional language generally, some other word is substituted in its place; how far those who still adhere to its use have come to feel that the word, *as standing for God*, is insufficient to meet the religious wants of the Chinese mind.

On the whole the outlook for *Shên*, after eighty-five years of its use, is not favorable. What with its constant use for Spirit in the expression, the Holy Spirit, both by Roman and Greek Catholics and by a large part of the Protestant missionaries, and its constantly diminishing use for God, he must be sanguine indeed who can still hope to see it prevail as the word for God, and all Christians united in its use.

*Fourth: Christian charity requires concession on the part of those who use Shang Ti for God to their brethren who cannot conscientiously use this word, and who have adopted T'ien Chu, the word used by the Latin and Greek Churches.*



It is undeniable that in the question as between the use of *Shang Ti* and the use of *T'ien Chu* for God there lies a deep doctrinal difference of opinion. It was thus in the controversy which vexed the Roman Church for one hundred and twenty years: it is thus in the Protestant church at the present day.

The question may be stated in the following manner. Is it safe in the interests of Christian theology to teach the knowledge of the true God, Jehovah, in the use of the term *Shang Ti*, which has always, from the earliest dawn of Chinese history to the present day, been the name of the chief object of worship in the national cult, an object of worship having an altar the most magnificent in the empire, to which, according to the dual system of Chinese philosophy, there is a correlated altar (that to Earth, as this is to Heaven) only second to it in magnificence; having also a ritual, in which are prescribed the times, places and manner of worship, the various offerings to be presented, the sacrificial vessels, the sacrificial victims and the persons by whom the worship is to be performed, all laid down in the statutes of the empire with a minuteness of detail exceeding, if possible, that with which the worship of Jehovah is laid down in the Law of Moses; an object of worship standing at the head of, and most intimately associated with, a great multitude of other objects of worship, including the various parts and powers of nature, the deceased emperors of the reigning dynasty, the first founders of the Chinese Empire, the deceased emperors of all preceding dynasties, deceased sages and heroes, all of which objects of worship, in the eyes of the Chinese nation, belong to one authorized and orthodox cult? Is it safe to call the true God, Jehovah, by the name of the chief object of worship in such a system, that is to say, *Shang Ti*?

To this question, as among the Roman Catholic, so among Protestant missionaries, there have always been a large number who have given a negative answer. They affirm that to use the word *Shang Ti* for God is contrary to the spirit of Scripture-teaching, which would forbid the identifying, or anything which might seem like, or lead to, the identifying of the true God, Jehovah, with any one of the gods, great or small, of the nations; that it would be contrary to what has taken place in the history of the propagation of Christianity in other lands, since the case has never been known in which the worship of the true God, Jehovah, has been taught in the use of the name of the chief object of worship of a non-Christian nation, an object of worship having an altar and ritual, as above described. It was not so in Egypt, not so in Greece, not so in Rome, not so in Babylon, and it is not so in India at the present day.

Some among those who would give these reasons against the use of *Shang Ti* for the true God, Jehovah, are prepared to go further

and affirm their conviction that the ancient religion of China, which also is the religion underlying all others in the Chinese mind at the present day, is a pantheistic nature-worship, at the head of which stands the worship of Heaven or *Shang Ti*, which object is represented, sometimes with greater, at others with less of personality, but never as God the Creator of all, before all, and above all, as well as in all and through all; moreover, that the entire system is pervaded by the dualism of Chinese philosophy. The words of Neander in regard to the Manicheans express the ground of their objection to the use of *T'ien* and *Shang Ti* for the God of Christians; "In those Nature-religions, instead of the idea of the personal living God, such as he declares himself to be in revelation, the pantheistic view predominates. Hence the seeming resemblance must transform itself into an essential difference. And if those old religions, in consideration of such a supposed relationship, were to be transported into Christianity, it could be no otherwise effected than by severing Christianity itself from its natural connection with the preparatory revelation of religion in Judaism, and by fusing it with a pantheistic Nature-religion, transforming it into an entirely different thing."

Doubtless many of that large number who now use *Shang Ti* for God would regard the above as a partial and unfair view of the case. But it has not been taken without careful and protracted study of the question, and it is held at the present time by many in the Protestant Church, as it was held in the Roman Church by those who opposed the Jesuits, until it finally prevailed. Nor is this view any more likely to die out in the Protestant Church, than it was formerly in the Roman Church.

What course should then be taken by those who use *Shang Ti* for God?

Some of these have held "That with the literary sect and in the state religion the two characters *Shang Ti* are not only honorable but the name of the true God;" and they have "Rejoiced to acknowledge the *Shang Ti* of the Chinese classics and the *Shang Ti* of the Chinese people as Him who is God over all, blessed forever." Others have supposed the *Shang Ti* of the ancient classics to be the true God, while in later times the knowledge of Him became obscured. Still others have held that the words Heaven and *Shang Ti*, while not exactly the same as God, were a very near approach to this, and were the most available words the Chinese language affords to express the idea of the Christians' God.

Shall now those who use *Shang Ti* for God assume that the objections of those who use *T'ien Chu* are without foundation, that they themselves understand the subject more thoroughly, are more free from prejudices, have a larger and wider outlook, and that their

view will finally prevail; prevail not only in the Protestant Church but prevail also in the Latin and Greek Churches, so that all will unite in using *Shang Ti* for God? Shall they, in this view, persist in the use of *Shang Ti* for God, seek for it the exclusive patronage of Bible and Tract Societies and refuse all advances toward unity?

Is there not a better way? Does not the royal law of Christian charity point out a solution of these difficulties? Cannot *Love to the Brethren* accomplish in the Protestant churches that which required the stern authority of successive Popes in the Roman Church? Where no sacrifice of principle is involved, it is honorable to make concessions to the weaker party. Be it that those who use *T'ien Chu* for God are thus regarded. Would it not be honorable in those who use *Shang Ti* for God to concede the point to those who use *T'ien Chu*, thus bringing to an end this long controversy and giving unity to all Christians in China in the word for God? Such a course would occasion devout thanksgiving to God among all who seek to spread the Gospel in this great empire.

*Fifth: The way out of this controversy by the use of T'ien Chu for God is not new to the thoughts of Protestant missionaries; nor has it wanted the consent or advocacy of conspicuous names on both sides of the question.*

In the year 1847 Dr. Medhurst wrote: "The Catholics who have had a wider and longer experience of China than we have, and who, in their day, knew more of Chinese literature and ideas than we can expect to know for the next century, are in this respect capable of affording us a lesson. They, on their first arrival in the country, adopted the word *Shên* for God, and they in their translation of part of the New Testament employed that word; but they have been compelled to give it up and have adopted instead *T'ien Chu* as indicative of that unity and supremacy which *Shên* could never give. If the rest of the brethren are of opinion that it would be better to profit by their experience, I shall have no objection to adopt *T'ien Chu*."

The first Bishop of the Church of England in China, the Rt. Rev. George Smith, Bishop of Victoria, in 1851 wrote to the Rev. T. W. Mellor, Editorial Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, as follows: "*T'ien Chu* (the Lord of Heaven), the Roman Catholic term for God, has doubtless many things to recommend it as preferable, being stereotyped by nearly a century and a half of usage in a religion which numbers its tens of thousands of converts in every province of the empire, and whose religious nomenclature Protestant Christians have adopted in most other points. Glad should I be, if the able pen of Dr. Medhurst could induce the Protestant missionary body to accept *T'ien Chu* as the basis of compromise."



In the year 1864 the Rev. Dr. Maclay, then Superintendent of the American Methodist Mission in Foochow, proposed to the Protestant missionaries in China to use *T'ien Chu* for God, and either *Shêng Shên* or *Shêng Ling* for Holy Spirit. In a letter dated July 13th, 1876, he supports this proposition at length. He writes among other things: "It is well to learn, even from our enemies. The Romish missionaries have fought the battle on the term question and settled it for themselves. Why not accept their terms? Expediency aside, is it wrong for us to use the same terms for God and Spirit in China when we are doing so in English?"

In the year 1865 the following paper was drawn up and circulated in Peking, largely through the exertions of the late Rev. Alexander Williamson, LL.D.

"In preparing and circulating a new Mandarin Version of the New Testament we are unanimous in desiring uniformity in the use of terms, and propose to employ those which we find to afford the only practicable basis of union, viz., *T'ien Chu* for God and *Shêng Shên* for the Holy Spirit.

"In conforming to this basis we do not propose to restrict ourselves in any other respect for the present."

The above paper was signed by the Rev. J. Edkins, D.D., of the London Mission; Rev. W. A. P. Martin, D.D., LL.D., of the American Presbyterian Mission; Hon. S. W. Williams, LL.D.; Rev. H. Blodget, D.D., of the American Board's Mission; Rev. W. H. Collins, M.D., of the Church Mission; John Dudgeon, M.D., of the London Mission; Rev. Chauncey Goodrich, D.D., of the American Board's Mission; Rev. James Williamson, of the London Mission; and, doubtless, by Dr. Williamson himself, who was so zealous in the movement.

The Rev. J. S. Burdon, now Bishop of Victoria, was then in England; and the Rev. S. I. J. Schereschewsky, afterwards Bishop of the American Episcopal Mission, was at the time also absent from Peking, so that their names do not appear on the paper, although both of them warmly approved of it as a basis of union.

It is not strange that this proposition was not at once received by missionaries in the South. Changes in such matters, when not enforced but made by conviction, take place slowly. Many of those who signed the paper became discouraged and did not consider themselves bound by it. Yet the movement for the use of *T'ien Chu* was permanent. Two editions of the New Testament were printed with *T'ien Chu* for God, the first by the British and Foreign Bible Society, the second by the American Bible Society, which Society has since printed different editions of the New Testament and of the Old Testament, with *T'ien Chu* for God, as also numerous

editions of portions of the Scriptures. Many tracts also have been printed with *T'ien Chu* for God in large editions.

Dr. Williamson, who made this proposition in 1865, wrote in a private letter in 1889, twenty-four years later, as follows: "*T'ien* (Heaven) in the Chinese mind and in Chinese literature has very decided personality about it. Still, I think the early Roman Catholics, in view of the whole case, did right in placing this personality beyond doubt and giving it emphatic prominence by adding Lord to it (*Chu*), and thus setting God forth as *T'ien Chu*. I therefore wish our predecessors had adopted this term, as well as the others bearing on religious nomenclature, at the commencement of their work in China."

The Church of England Mission in North China and the Rt. Rev. Bishop Scott have from the first followed the usage of the Roman Catholics in the words for God and Holy Spirit, using *T'ien Chu* and *Shêng Shên*.

It was to be expected that in dictionaries made by Russians and Frenchmen the God of Christians would be given as the equivalent of *T'ien Chu*. Mr. Herbert Giles, of the British Consular Service, in his recently published Chinese-English Dictionary, after translating *T'ien Chu* as the "The Lord of Heaven," adds this remark: "This term has been adopted by the Roman Catholics as the Chinese equivalent for God, and is the least open to objection of all terms so far in use amongst Christian missionaries."

Enough has been written under this head to show that the use of *T'ien Chu* for God has seemed to many to afford a way out of the difficulties of this controversy.

*Sixth: Answers to objections to the use of T'ien Chu for God.*

It is implied in the remark above quoted that objections may be urged against every term which has been proposed, and, it may be added, which can be proposed, as a translation of the word God into Chinese. Objections to the use of *Shên* and of *Shang Ti* have already been alluded to. It remains to state and to answer, so far as may be, objections which have been urged against the use of *T'ien Chu*.

Objection I. The term does not correspond to *Eloha*, *Theos* and *Deus*, which words can be used in the singular, or in the plural, at pleasure, and can be applied to false gods, as well as to the only true and living God. This was a point of earnest contention in the argument of the first Bishop Boone; and it certainly is desirable that, as in the original languages of the Sacred Scriptures and in the various languages of Europe, so in all other languages, such a word should be found.

But what if in the Chinese language such a term cannot be found? It will be remembered by those who urge that *Shên* is such a term, that in the view of the greater number of missionaries in

China, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, this word is insufficient to meet the higher uses of the word God; to signify the one and only Creator and Lord, whom Christians adore and serve: and that many regard this word as meaning spirit or spirits, and this alone.

It will be remembered also by those who contend that *Shang Ti* is such a word that it has never been used as a general word for god, the gods, by the Roman Catholics, and that it is regarded by the greater part of Protestant missionaries, among them many who use *Shang Ti* for God, as out of place when applied to the gods generally.

Thus it appears that neither *Shên* nor *Shang Ti*, in the view of most missionaries, corresponds to the words *Eloha*, *Theos* and *Deus*. The same is the case with *T'ien Chu*. When used properly it signifies the true and only God, and may not be applied to the false gods. This leads to the question whether, in the Chinese language, it is absolutely necessary to find a word thus corresponding; whether the Christian religion may not be taught to the Chinese in its integrity, using one word for God and another word for god, gods, as is now done by the Roman Catholics and by others?

Some light on this question may be obtained by referring to what is done in India. It is well known that throughout the greater part of India the word *deva* is used very generally for god, gods. It is also used for the true God, as a translation of *Elohim* and *Theos*, generally in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies, and, where Mahratti is spoken, also in the central provinces. But in the greater part of India *deva* cannot be used for the true God. "Even in Southern India it labors under the objection of having been more frequently used to denote a god than God, while in Northern India it would be almost unavoidable and universal that it should be understood by the ignorant as descriptive of inferior deities."

Among the 50,000,000 who speak the Hindustani or Urdu, the word *Khuda*, Lord, is used for God. In the Hindi, which is spoken by a still greater number, the word *Ishwara*, Lord, is used for God, and *Para-Ishwara*, the Supreme Lord, for Jehovah. Even in some parts of Southern India *Ishwara*, with some qualifying adjective, is used for God, while, as in Northern India, the word *deva* is used for god, gods. Thus it appears that in the greater part of India the missionaries use one word for god and another word for god and gods. If such is the case in India, may not the same thing be done in China? If the Christian faith is taught in its integrity and purity in India, notwithstanding this infelicity in language, may not the same result be secured in China?

Objection II. It has been objected to the use of *T'ien Chu* for God that there are pagan associations connected with this term.



Such an objection should be fairly met and receive all due consideration.

It is said that *T'ien Chu* was one of the eight gods worshipped by the renowned Emperor Ts'in Shi-hwaug. The mention of this worship is found in the works of the historian Sz Ma-ts'ien, occurring incidentally in his notice of the very ancient rites of worship called *Fêng Shan* (封禪), which were performed on the mountain T'ai-shan in Shantung. Shi Hwaug, having given offence to his literary men by his method of performing these extraordinary sacrifices, the *Fêng-shan* was derided by them on account of a violent storm which he encountered in coming down from the mountain. Thereupon he went to the east and sacrificed to the famous mountains and great streams, also to "the eight gods." It is not supposed that this Emperor failed to maintain the worship of the national cult, but on this single occasion of performing the sacrifices *Fêng-shan*, he worshipped also "the eight gods," which may have belonged to the feudal territory from which he sprang. Little or nothing is known of this worship.

The "eight gods" were \**T'ien Chu*, lord of heaven; *Ti Chu*, lord of earth; *Ping Chu*, lord of war; *Yin Chu*, lord of darkness; *Yang Chu*, lord of light; *Yueh Chu*, lord of the moon; *Jih Chu*, lord of sun; *Sz Shih Chu*, lord of the four seasons. Beyond the bare mention in this place no information in regard to this worship is accessible to scholars generally, and nothing whatever is known of it to the common people. Only a few students of antiquity know of it.

The same may be said of a casual mention of the worship of *T'ien Chu* by a tribe of Mongols, the Hsin T'u (休屠), who were subject to the Huns (匈奴), but afterwards submitted to Wn Ti of the Han dynasty.

Besides this there is in Buddhist books mention of the god Indra, in Chinese (因陀羅), one of whose titles is *Nêng T'ien Chu* (能天主), the powerful lord of the devas; the Chinese word *T'ien* (天) being here used for the word *deva*, gods.

The answer then to the objection from the pagan uses of the term *T'ien Chu* is, that such uses are very infrequent, are unknown to the common people and not generally known to scholars, while its use to designate the God of Christians is known throughout the Chinese empire.

In this connection the mind naturally turns to the objection already stated to the use of the term *Shang Ti* for God, on the ground that it was the name of the principal object of worship, not only of the Emperor Ts'in She-hwaug but of all the Emperors

\* 天主地主兵主陰主陽主月主日主四時主。



who preceded him, as it has been the name of the chief object of worship of all the Emperors who have succeeded him down to the present day, and that it is inseparably bound up in the Chinese pantheon.

Objection III. It has been objected to the use of *T'ien Chu* for God that the two words *T'ien* (Heaven) and *Chu* (Lord) are in opposition, and, after all, mean only Heaven, so that those not Christians misunderstand the doctrine and suppose us to teach that Heaven is the God we worship (以天爲主).

This objection of course would not be urged by those who think the *T'ien* (Heaven) of the Chinese signifies the same or very nearly the same as the God of Christians, but only by those who wish to escape this—in their view—pantheistic way of thinking.

In considering this objection it is to be observed that a similar one might be urged against the use of *T'ien Fu* for Heavenly Father, which is universal among missionaries in China and is regarded not only as a correct but a very happy form of expression. The objection would be that the combination *T'ien Fu* means only Heaven as Father. Certainly this would be the meaning, if *Fu* were placed before *T'ien*, so as to read *Fu T'ien*, in which case it would correspond with *Fu T'ien* in the expression everywhere current—*Fu T'ien Mu Ti*, 'Father Heaven, Mother Earth.'

One and the same answer may be given to this objection against the combinations *T'ien Chu* and *T'ien Fu*. It is that they are very frequently employed in Chinese literature, or in the speech of the common people, so that the meaning attached to them is easily fixed by Christian usage. In fact, the native Christians frequently drop the word *T'ien* and use *Chu* alone, as do the Mohammedans, thus showing how they understand the combination *T'ien Chu*. They all know that the God they worship is not Heaven but the Lord of Heaven.

The combinations *T'ien Chu*, *T'ien Fu* are widely to be distinguished from *T'ien Ye*, *Lao T'ien Ye* (Sire Heaven, Old Sire Heaven), which are everywhere in use among the people of China. In this case the word *Ye* (Sire) is but a personification of Heaven, and is attached to *T'ien* with careless ease, containing slight honor, amounting almost to slang, as is evident in numerous other expressions in which the same word *Ye*\* is used.

Objection IV. It has been objected to the use of *T'ien Chu* for God that in this combination the character *Chu* (主) may sometimes be used as a verb; and the passage from the *Shuoh Wen* is cited, in

\* 天爺, 天地爺, 城隍爺, 太陽爺, 月亮爺, 龍王爺, 財神爺, 土地爺, 龍王爺, 佛爺, 門神爺, 云云.

which it is said that \**"Heaven controls (=Chu) the sending down of air, or breath, to influence all things."*

In answer to this objection it is to be said that the word *Chu*, when thus combined with Heaven (*T'ien*), is very seldom used as a verb, and whenever it has this signification the fact is very easily determined by the connection.

Objection V. It has been objected that the expression "Lord of Heaven" localizes God, since God is not only the God of Heaven but of the Earth also and of every part of the universe. But it should be remembered that the expression "Lord of Heaven" by no means confines the power of God to Heaven but rather exalts it over all parts of the universe. The Heavens are conceived of as the most grand, exalted, vast of all God's works, and in speaking of the *Lord of Heaven* we set his glory above all created things. Thus in the Bible, especially in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel, when the people of Israel had been brought by captivity into contact with the ethnic religions in Babylon, we find the true God, Jehovah, often called the "God of Heaven." So far from localizing God the design was to exalt him, not only above all false gods but above the most glorious part of the frame of nature, and so, as above and over all.

Objection VI. It has been objected to the use of *T'ien Chu* for God that the word *Chu* is needed as a translation of Lord, and that by its use in the combination *T'ien Chu* for God we restrict our vocabulary, so as to have but one word for Lord and God.

That there is force in this objection no one can deny. It is frankly admitted that the Chinese language does not afford us the two words God and Lord, as do the Hebrew, Greek, Latin and the various languages of modern Europe. The objections which lie against the use of either *Shên* or *Shang Ti* in this sense have already been alluded to. It lies without the scope of this paper to give them in full. Suffice it to say that from the first entrance into China of those who had derived their monotheism from the Bible, neither of these words has been used for God. The Nestorian Christians and the Mohammedans used *Chu* and *Chên Chu* (Lord and True Lord) for God. They brought in at times the word *Elohim*, as in our day a Christian might introduce the name Jehovah, in saying the true God, Jehovah.

The Chinese is not the only language in which the word Lord is used for God. As has been already stated, in the greater part of

\* 天神引出萬物者也徐曰申即引也天主降氣以感萬物故言引出萬物。The divine force or energy of Heaven is that which leads forth all things. Hsü says *Shên* is to lead. Heaven controls the sending down of air, or breath, to influence all things. Therefore it is said to lead forth all things.

India *Ishwara* and *Para Ishwara* (Lord and Supreme Lord) are used for God and Jehovah: also among the fifty millions of Urdu-speaking Mohammedans in India the word *Kh'udu* (Lord) is used for God. Moreover, it is to be observed that in China the combination *T'ien Chu* (Lord of Heaven) does in a measure relieve the difficulty. For in this way God is set forth as Lord over the most glorious, exalted and immeasurably vast of all his works, so that He alone can receive this appellation. Hence it is that the words *Chu T'ien Chu*, as a rendering of Lord God, are not mere tautology but convey a most elevating conception of the Divine Being, in this respect having a decided advantage over the words *Chu Shang Chu* (Lord Supreme Lord) as a rendering of the same expression.

Objection VII. It has been objected to the use of *T'ien Chu* for God, that the decision to use this term was made out of China, among those not familiar with the language and not understanding the nature of the case.

This objection, it will be observed, has force only as against the place in which the decision was made, and not against the decision itself, since a right decision may be made in a wrong place. The same objection may be urged against the use of *Shang Ti* for God, since the British and Foreign Bible Society made its decision to use this term also out of China in Great Britain, and has adhered to this decision, with the single exception of printing one edition of the Testament with *T'ien Chu* for God. The Scotch National Bible Society, which also formed its decision out of China, has, so far as is known to the writer, made no exception in its use of *Shang Ti*. The combined action of these two Societies has of course given great currency to the term. At the same time it has come to pass that those English missionaries, among them the Bishop and Presbyters of the North-China Mission of the Church of England and the Senior Bishop of the Church of England in China, who cannot consent to use *Shang Ti* for God, are unable to secure Bibles for their work from the British Bible Societies.

The same objection might at one time have been urged against the use of *Shén* for God, since the American Bible Society in like manner formed its decision to use this word for God out of China in the United States. This Society, however, subsequently listened to the representation of missionaries and changed its course. Although it still maintains the view which it has held from the first, that the use of *Shang Ti* for God "is highly objectionable, as having a pantheistic sense in the minds of the learned and an idolatrous sense in the minds of the vulgar," yet it does not refuse to print Bibles in any terms which American missionaries desire to use.



As to the validity of the argument against deciding such a question out of China, there is this to be said. There are two questions involved in what is popularly known in China as the "Term Question," one a question of theology, the other a question of philology, as to the proper use of words. The theological question centers in the identifying, or seeming to identify, or putting Chinese converts in a way to identify, the chief object of worship in the national cult of China with the true God, Jehovah, by using the name of the chief object of worship in that cult, *Shang Ti*, for this God whom Christians worship. On such a question the opinion of judicious theologians, well read in Church history, who have also made a study of comparative religions, must have great value. On the whole it would appear that a combination of Chinese scholarship with such theological attainments is needed, and that the place of the decision is a matter of less importance.

Objection VIII. It is objected to the use of *T'ien Chu* for God that the decision to use this term was made by the Pope of Rome.

This again is an objection not so much against the decision itself, as against the person from whom it emanates. A correct decision may be given by a person to whom it pertains not to give such a decision. The decisions of the Pope of Rome have just so much of force as they have of truth or reason in their favor. If they are correctly formed judgments, agreeable to the Sacred Scriptures, and commending themselves to the reason and conscience, they will stand. If the contrary is true of them, they are without force and cannot stand. It would be a task no Protestant would venture, to go through with all the decisions of the Popes of Rome and remove from the Church everything which in doctrine and practice had been settled by such decisions.

While nothing is claimed for this decision on the ground of the authority of the Popes of Rome, yet in all fairness it is urged that the bare fact that the decision emanated from such a source is not of itself a sufficient reason for its rejection. On the contrary, if attention is given to the circumstances of the case, and to the history of the discussion, much will be found to commend it to the thoughtful consideration of those who do not acknowledge the See of Rome.

The impartial student of this controversy in the Roman Church will not fail to notice that the decision to use *T'ien Chu* for God, and not to use *Shang Ti*, was made and enforced, not as against Protestantism but as against Paganism, and apparently contrary to all the worldly interests and outward prosperity of the Church; made in the face of great opposition from the Chinese government and consequent danger of persecution and death; made after in-



effectual attempts to adjust these differences in China, at one time by a Conference of the leading members of the Jesuit order, before the arrival of the other orders in China ; at another time by a Conference of members of all the orders ; and finally that it was made and enforced by successive Popes through a period of many years, the one decision being in fact eight decisions, the first in 1656, the last in 1743, most of them arrived at only after very careful and deliberate investigations of the most learned theologians in Rome, the testimony of the most able missionaries on both sides of the question, and of numerous Chinese, being cautiously weighed and duly estimated.

Such considerations, and others which cannot be mentioned here, may suggest the question, whether God in his providence has not by these discussions in the Roman Church (though not unmingled with heat and animosity of feeling, as is often the case in such controversies) and by the decisions of so many Popes, for the most part very carefully taken, indicated to his people in after times the proper course amid these very difficult questions which meet the Christian missionary in China. The decisions in regard to ancestral worship and the worship of Confucius are very generally accepted as correct by Protestant missionaries. Will it not be found that the decision to use *T'ien Chu* for God, and not *Shang Ti* was also correct ?

Objection IX. It has been objected to the use of *T'ien Chu* for God that Protestant Christians would thereby be confounded with the Roman Catholics.

In this case the objection is not to the term itself but to the supposed consequences of its use by Protestants. It is said that the Roman Catholics are called in China the *T'ien Chu Chiao*, the 'Church of *T'ien Chu*,' and if Protestants adopt the same words, *T'ien Chu*, for God, they will inevitably be regarded as of the same religion.

It should be borne in mind by those who urge this objection that a like reason against the use of the same word for God which the Roman Catholics use must exist in every mission field in which the Roman Catholics have preceded Protestants, and in which they have called their Church the "Church of God." Are the objectors then prepared in every case to use a different word for God ? But this has not been done in other mission fields. In all Christian lands, and in almost every heathen country where Protestant and Roman Catholic missions co-exist, the same word is used for God by both. Not only so, but it is easy to see that the rule of adopting a different word might, in many cases, cause great disadvantages to Protestant missions, or indeed leave them in grave doctrinal errors, as, in the view of many, is true in the present case.

But how far would those who oppose the use of *T'ien Chu* be willing to apply this principle? To the word for God only, or also to the word for the Lord Jesus? Should the Roman Catholics in any heathen country, in which their missions may have preceded those of Protestant Christians, call their Church the "Church of Jesus" (as Protestants now call the Protestant Church in China), would Protestants in the same country on this account be debarred from using the same word for the Lord Jesus, which they also use? Or if Protestant Christians should in any country precede the Roman Catholics, and call their Church the "Church of God," or the "Church of Jesus," is it supposed that the Roman Catholics would on this account refrain from using the same word for God, or for Jesus, which the Protestants also use? At present Protestant Christians in China are known as the "*Yasu Chiao*," or the "Church of Jesus" (the word Jesus being used in China much as the word "Christ" is used in Western nations). Are Roman Catholics in China on this account to use a different word for the Lord Jesus, lest they should be confounded with Protestant Christians? Such considerations seem insufficient on either side to warrant the avoidance of the words in question, thereby necessitating the search for some other word, which may be less suitable for the purpose.

The fear of being confounded with the Roman Catholics is not a sufficient reason to determine the choice of the word for God among Protestant Christians. These branches of the Church of God are not to be distinguished from each other by calling God or Christ by different names but by the *things in which they really differ*. The true Christian, be he Protestant or Roman Catholic, belongs to the Church of God, also to the Church of the Lord Jesus; and he places himself at a disadvantage before the heathen when he denies that he belongs to the one or to the other. Some other way should be found of expressing his dissent from those whom he regards as in error. "The Roman Catholic Church" is a name well known in other countries, which fitly distinguishes that branch of the Christian Church from all others. Why not employ this designation in China? The denial that one belongs to the Roman Catholic Church does not involve the denial of any Scripture truth, as does the denial that one belongs to the "Church of God," or to the "Church of Christ."

Let not then a consideration which is just in its proper place, and has its legitimate uses, be elevated out of such place and uses, and employed in a way, not only to injure the Protestant Churches in China, but to cause lasting injury to the whole Church, by creating divisions not existing hitherto, and unknown in other parts of the world.

In what has been said thus far, it has been conceded that by avoiding the use of *T'ien Chu* for God, Protestants would be either wholly, or to a great degree, distinguished from Roman Catholics. But this is by no means the true state of the case. Whatever words are used for God, these two great branches of the Christian Church must inevitably for a time, and to an extent, be confounded in the minds of the Chinese. They both accept and teach the great facts of the Christian religion as stated in the Apostles' Creed, and they both reject and oppose the idolatry and nature worship of the Chinese. The teachers of both come from lands in the Far West, and are similar in stature, complexion and general appearance. It is very natural that the Chinese should suppose them to be teachers of one and the same religion. And thus the two Churches have been more or less confounded from the first until the present time, and that although different words have been used for God in most parts of China; nor is it seen that this confusion has been any greater in places where the same word is used for God.

This evil of confounding Protestants and Roman Catholics may be greatly overestimated, both as to its continuance and as to its results. Among Church members it cannot long remain. The Roman Catholics are very careful to warn their converts against Protestantism, and Protestants are not less sure to warn the Christians under their instruction against the errors of Romanism. Thus the distinction between the two Churches soon becomes known among Christians. This knowledge is rapidly communicated to those without the Church, both by what is said and written on the subject, as also by what is seen and manifest to all. Rulers and people gradually come to know that differences exist between the two great branches of the Christian Church now spreading in China, and learn, more or less correctly, the origin and nature of those differences. The natural course then is that Christians should state these differences plainly and fairly, defending in all lawful and just methods what is true and right, and should then await patiently the time when Roman Catholicism and Protestantism shall stand before the Chinese, as they stand before the people of other lands. Far better this than to add to the differences which already exist by creating a new difference which does not exist elsewhere.

The supposed evils of being thus confounded with Roman Catholics may be summed up under three heads. *First*, the being involved in ill-will and persecutions brought upon Christians through the errors and misdeeds of Roman Catholics. *Second*, the hindrances to Christian work and fewness of accessions to the Church, consequent upon the antipathy of the people to the Roman Catholics



and their methods. *Third*, the way made easy for the perversion of Protestants to the Roman Catholic Church.

However great these evils may seem to Protestant Christians, it is doubtless true that, in the view of Roman Catholics, the evils of being confounded by the Chinese with Protestants are even of greater magnitude. It is to be borne in mind on both sides that the things to which Protestants object in Roman Catholics, and the things to which Roman Catholics object in Protestants, are not, for the most part, such as excite great animosity in the Chinese. Their thoughts are directed to other issues, such as overturnings, which Christianity, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, must make in the present religious systems of China, changes in long established customs and possible political complications. Already they see the boundaries of their own country contiguous to those of territories belonging to great nations of the West, and it would not be strange if national jealousy should connect these things with Christian missions. Such being the case, neither of these two branches of the Church can expect wholly to avoid ill-will and persecution. It would be in vain to suppose that by standing alone they could retain the goodwill of the rulers and people; nor should an undue estimate be allowed of the evils resulting from classing together all who bear the Christian name.

Nor is it to be forgotten that certain benefits have resulted to Protestant Christians by being thus classed with the Roman Catholics. Great joy was occasioned among Protestant Christians by the toleration of Christianity in China, secured through the efforts of the French Minister, M. de Lagrene, in 1844, 1845. The rescript of toleration for the *T'ien Chu Chiao*, or Church of God (Roman Catholics), which he obtained from the Chinese government, was explained at his request by Kiying as including under the same designation, all Christians, and "granted as complete toleration to all Christian sects as the writer was able to do from his knowledge of their differences."

Ever since the year 1861 Protestant Christians in the rural districts of China have enjoyed to a greater or less degree the benefits resulting from the Imperial order by Prince Kung, which was granted to the Roman Catholics, explaining and enforcing the toleration clauses in the treaty with France, and protecting Christians from imposition of unjust assessments for idolatrous purposes. Up to the year 1882 the document was the strong ground of appeal for Protestants in cases of oppression of native Christians in country towns and villages. In that year the benefits of this Imperial order were formally extended to Protestant Christians by the action of the government, at the request of the Hon. J. B. Angell.



It is not too much to say that the precedence of Roman Catholic missionaries in all the provinces of the empire, and the continued prosecution of their labors there, has made it vastly easier for Protestant missions to make that onward movement into the same provinces, which has characterized the last thirty years, and which gives promise of so great good in the years to come. And if a few converts have gone to the Roman Church, not well understanding the points at issue between them and Protestants, it is also true that there are worthy members of Protestant Churches, whose first religious impressions were received from Roman Catholics. Who can say that the gain has not been greater than the loss?

There is a wider outlook in this matter than the fear of being confounded with the Roman Catholics. Protestant Christians are in China, not only to bring the Chinese faith to the Christian, but they also have an important mission toward the Roman Catholics. In various nations of Europe, in Mexico and in South America special efforts are making to bring Roman Catholics to a Scriptural faith. How shall this be done in China but by putting the Sacred Scriptures in the language of the common people into the hands of their Church members? This, after three hundred years in China, the authorities of that Church have not done. But in putting the Scriptures into their hands shall we use a word for God which they regard as the name of the chief object of worship in a pagan religion, which they never use for God, and which they are bound by oaths and promises not to use on pain of excommunication from their Church? How utterly futile will efforts be to influence them by such a Bible! With good conscience will their priests forbid its use. But if the same word for God is used, which they also use, their priests will need to find some other reason for refusing permission to read the book. They may be compelled at length to furnish a translation of their own, as they have given the Douay version in English. This would be of immense advantage to their Church members.

In our contentions in China with the Roman Catholics (for Paul must contend with Peter whenever the interests of the truth and of the Church require it) we do, as it were, mount their deck and meet them face to face, by the use of *T'ien Chu* for God. Otherwise all our efforts for them will be put forth at the greatest disadvantage. No word in the Chinese language has more of religious reverence attached to it than the word *T'ien*, Heaven. To this word, *Chu*, Lord (the word which the Mohammedans in China all use for God), has been added by Christianity, to make it personal, and to show that, not the creature but the Creator of all is to be worshipped. It will be well for Protestants to consider whether in

leaving a word for God so well calculated to excite the reverential feelings of the Chinese to the Roman Catholics, they do not give them the inside track in the race. There are two large cities in China in which are found laborers of the Roman and Greek Catholic and of the English and American Protestant Episcopal Church, all using *T'ien Chu* for God. In one of the cities these non-Episcopal Protestant Churches also very generally use *T'ien Chu* for God, while in the other the use of *Shang Ti* prevails. God speed the day when on this point the Churches in China shall be one!

In what has been written no allusion has been made to the word for Holy Spirit. This has been regarded as a matter of secondary importance in comparison with the word for God. For many years the writer has been convinced that, while the word *Shên* must come to be used for god, gods, as it is now by the Roman Catholics and most Protestants, it may also be used in the combination *Shêng Shen* for the Holy Spirit, as it is used by the Roman Catholics and by a large proportion of Protestant Christians. He is not therefore unwilling to use this combination *Shêng Shên* for the Holy Spirit in the Bible and other Christian books. If both *Shêng Shên* and *Shêng Ling* should maintain their place in the Christian literature of China, as we have in English Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit, this would occasion no confusion of ideas.

H. BLODGET.

PEKING, February 13, 1893.





